



Report of the Special Representative on Central Asia

Mr. Roman Haider

18th OSCE PA Winter Meeting, Vienna, 22 February 2019

Mandate

In October 2018, OSCE PA President George Tsereteli appointed me as his Special Representative on Central Asia with the following mandate:

- Encourage active participation by parliamentarians from Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan), in the work of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly to strengthen parliamentarism in the region;
- Liaise and support the work of the OSCE field missions in the region, as well as relevant OSCE institutions, international and regional organizations and diplomatic missions;
- Encourage closer contacts between the parliaments in the region to promote greater intra-regional cooperation in all three OSCE dimensions;
- Report to the President of the Assembly on developments in the region, including opportunities for enhanced parliamentary dialogue and further inter-parliamentary co-operation among the Central Asian states.

I would like to thank the President for having selected me to act as his entrusted representative in a key region for the OSCE, where it has been carrying out excellent work for over twenty years, hand-in-hand with national governments, parliaments, and citizens.

It is heartening to hear that the OSCE continues to be of relevance for the Central Asian region as an instrument of multilateral diplomacy in the areas of early warning, conflict prevention, conflict management, and post-conflict reconstruction. Indeed, the President of Kazakhstan, Mr. Nursultan Nazarbayev, recently announced his intention to host a summit in 2020 to 'renew' the Helsinki Final Act and has also taken the lead on discussions regarding how to promote comprehensive security in the region through the creation of a so-called 'Asian OSCE'.

Having recently visited two of the OSCE field presences in Central Asia, I was reminded that these offices not only represent the OSCE, but they also work for the benefit of the countries' populations, jointly designing and implementing projects in all three dimensions, and addressing a broad range of issues such as countering terrorism, cybersecurity, border co-operation, combating corruption, water policies, gender issues, judicial reform and human rights protection.

These are exciting and challenging times for these five very different countries who, in the face of common challenges have entered a period of renewed regional co-operation. Following a historic meeting in Astana in March 2018 attended by four of the five Central Asian Presidents convened in Astana (Turkmenistan was represented by the Speaker of the Majlis/Parliament), agreement was reached to meet on an annual basis to discuss regional co-operation.

Within the OSCE PA we have also witnessed broader engagement as Uzbekistan has resumed participation in our activities. I am also pleased to see that, for the first time in an OSCE PA Winter Meeting, all five countries of Central Asia have registered to attend. The election observation mission to the 24 February parliamentary elections in the Republic of Moldova will also include, for the first time, two Uzbek members of parliament.

Recent Activities

I have structured my activities along two directions. First, in line with the new vision for the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly which foresees closer co-ordination and co-operation with the OSCE Secretariat, participating States and Institutions, I have met with a number of key representatives to co-ordinate our strategy and identify areas where the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly can contribute using the specific tools at its disposal.

Secondly, I have visited two countries in my capacity as Special Representative on Central Asia – Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, in addition to the Kyrgyz Republic which I visited on the occasion of the 2018 OSCE PA Autumn Meeting. These visits, which were designed to strengthen the working relationship between the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and the delegations of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, as well as to raise the visibility and support the work of the OSCE field presences in the region, proved to be extremely useful.

In the four months since my appointment, I have carried out the following activities:

- Travelled to Kazakhstan (19-20 November 2018) and Uzbekistan (21 November 2018) as part of the delegation headed by President Tsereteli;
- I have also established a good working relationship with all five Heads of Mission of Central Asian countries here in Vienna whom I have met on several occasions.

Visit to Kazakhstan (Astana, 19-20 November 2018)

From 19-20 November, I joined the delegation led by OSCE PA President George Tsereteli to Kazakhstan, a strong supporter of the OSCE in the region – having served in the Chairmanship and hosted the only Summit meeting during this century – and an active participant in the OSCE PA. The agenda of the visit included meetings with the Chairman of the Senate Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, Chairman of the Mazhilis Nurlan Nigmatulin, Minister of Foreign Affairs Kairat Abdrakhmanov, Interior Minister Kalmukhanbet Kassymov, Chairman of the Supreme Court Zhakyp Assanov and Deputy Prosecutor General Andrey Lukin.

A wide range of topics were discussed during these meetings, including strengthening parliamentarism and parliamentary oversight, nuclear non-proliferation, economic reforms and enhancing social welfare of citizens, promoting the rule of law through police and judiciary reform, as well as regional co-operation and the role of the OSCE in promoting regional security and addressing transnational threats such as terrorism. President Nazarbayev's intention to host a meeting in 2020 to review and 'update' the Helsinki Final Act was also touched upon.

Amb. Gyorgy Szabo and his staff also welcomed us to the premises of the OSCE Programme Office in Astana (POiA) where we were briefed on current projects and met with representatives of civil society engaged in police and judiciary reform with the support of the POiA.

Visit to Uzbekistan (Tashkent, 21 November 2018)

After the visit to Kazakhstan, President Tsereteli and I travelled on to Tashkent where we were joined by the Chair of the General Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions Margareta Kiener-Nellen. The aim of this visit was to further consolidate co-operation with Uzbekistan which resumed participation in OSCE PA Statutory meetings in 2017 and in September 2018 nominated a delegation to the OSCE PA.

The OSCE PA delegation met with the Speaker of the Senate of the Oliy Majlis, Nigmatilla Yuldashev, Deputy Speaker and Head of the Delegation of Uzbekistan to the OSCE PA Svetlana Artikova, the Deputy Speaker of the Legislative Council of the Oliy Majlis Savar Otamuratov, as well as officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Discussions focused on regional co-operation and security, domestic reforms, human rights protections, water management and environmental challenges, and the fight against terrorism.

We were also briefed by Amb. John MacGregor on the activities of the OSCE Project Coordinator in Uzbekistan and had the opportunity to discuss with his staff the many projects currently being implemented in line with the action plan for further development of co-operation between the Republic of Uzbekistan and the OSCE for 2018-2019.

2019 OSCE PA Winter Meeting

I intend to use the opportunity of the OSCE PA Winter Meeting to strengthen ties with the delegations from Central Asian participating States.

On 19 February I met with Mr. Nurlan Nigmatulin, Chairman of the Mazhilis of the Republic of Kazakhstan. I will also participate in a meeting between Mr. Nigmatulin, and the President of the Austrian National Council Mr. Wolfgang Sobotka on 21 February.

I also plan to meet with:

- The delegation of the **Kyrgyz Republic**, headed by Mr. Isa Omurkulov;
- The delegation of the **Republic of Uzbekistan**, headed by Ms. Svetlana Artikova, Deputy Speaker of the Senate of the Oliy Majlis;
- The delegation of **Turkmenistan**, headed by Mr. Yusupguly Eshayev, Chairman of the Mejlis Committee for the Protection of Human Rights and Freedoms and Acting Head of Delegation;
- The delegation of **Tajikistan**, headed by Mr. Jurakhon Majidzoda, Acting Head.

I will also have the opportunity to inter-act with a number of Central Asian Members of Delegation on 20 February, when I host the meeting of the Silk Road Support Group of the OSCE PA in my capacity as Vice-Chair. The focus of our discussions at this meeting will be connectivity in Eurasia with rail transport as an example.

The Winter Meeting will also be an opportunity to interact with top OSCE officials and Heads of Institutions, including:

- OSCE Secretary General **Thomas Greminger** to discuss how the OSCE and its Parliamentary Assembly can contribute to strengthening regional security and co-operation in Central Asia.
- OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media **Harlem Désir** to discuss recent developments concerning freedom of expression, freedom of the media and the safety of journalists in Central Asia as well as planned activities and possibilities for co-operation.
- OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities **Lamberto Zannier**, for an overview of current issues and recent developments in the areas of education and language policy and measures to promote inter-ethnic relations and regional co-operation.
- Head of the OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre (CPC) Amb. **Marcel Peško** and the CPC desk officer on Central Asia with a view to discussing strategic priorities for 2019 and coordination of activities.

Foreseeable steps forwards

Until the Annual Session in Luxembourg in July 2019 I intend to:

- Attend the Regional Meeting of Head of Field Operations in Central Asia and address the event to mark the 20th anniversary of the OSCE's presence in Turkmenistan (Ashgabat, 15-17 April 2019)
- Meet with the EU Special Representative for Central Asia Amb. **Peter Burian** to discuss the EU's new Central Asia strategy to be adopted by the end of 2019 and to identify areas in which the EU and the OSCE PA can work together for the benefit of security, stability and democracy in Central Asia.
- Attend the Astana Economic Forum (16-17 May 2019)
- Carry out an additional visit to the region in June (potentially to Tajikistan).
- Work on further strengthening intra-regional co-operation through regular contacts with the Central Asia parliamentary delegations to the OSCE PA.
- Continue to have regular contacts with the Ambassadors of the region and the OSCE Institutions in Vienna.

Concluding Remarks

This past year has shown that we can find inspiration in the diplomatic breakthroughs that have taken place in Central Asia. I look forward to the continued active engagement of parliamentarians to address the region's challenges in our discussions and debates.